



**1110th meeting of the
Pacific Coast Numismatic Society**
7:30PM Wednesday October 22, 2008
Building C, Fort Mason
San Francisco, California

**Medallic Portraits -- A Visit to the
British Museum Exhibit of 1893:
An illustrated presentation**
Steve Huston

Please join us Wednesday, October 22, 2008 to hear Steve Huston to tell us about the interesting medals exhibited at the British Museum in 1893.

1109th meeting, Henry Meiggs, Honest Harry or Dirty Rotten Scoundrel Michael Wehner (reported by *Herb Miles*)

Was he a scoundrel or a saint; having lived in San Francisco during the turbulent 1800s, he probably was a bit of both!

During his life, Henry Meiggs, (1811-1877), built and squandered several fortunes. He made and lost his first fortune as a lumber baron in New York, finally making a 20 to 1 profit on a load of lumber shipped to San Francisco in 1849 during the Gold Rush period.

Speculating in real estate in the city, he promoted and built a wooden pier in the North Beach area of the city, called Meiggs' Wharf, stating it was more convenient than the current piers in use as it was closer to the Golden Gate! This pier, extending into the bay approximately 1600 to 2000 feet at the foot of Powell Street became the prime landing site for arriving ships. Not content with only the pier, he built warehouses, streets, and many other structures, becoming financially stretched in the process.

Having befriended politicians and movers and shakers of San Francisco, he came into possession of mayoral and controller signed street "warrants" which allowed him to "borrow" funds to keep his enterprises going. However, in 1854 just before the authorities discovered his "borrowing", he fled to Chile, never to return to San Francisco. He set up similar speculative operations in South America, becoming rich and famous for building railroads in Peru and Chile.

It is said that he paid back all the debt stolen through the "warrant" scheme, except to those who purchased them at a *deep discount*, but his attempt to return to San Francisco by petitioning the state legislature to grant him a pardon for his past crimes was denied; the governor vetoed the bill and he never returned to the state. Nevertheless, in 1977 a San Francisco Superior Court Judge granted him a posthumous victory, quashing the indictment due to his "self-rehabilitation!"

Michael's talk and presentation included pictures and drawings of Meiggs' Wharf, the Cobweb Palace (a famous Saloon located on the wharf,) and a photo of a rare Meiggs' Wharf Company certificate issued in 1889 (long after his death).

September 2008 Exhibits

Jerry brought a book he had written that included information on Henry Meiggs and exhibited a medal picturing the TransAndean Railroad, one of Meiggs' large scale accomplishments.

Ed exhibited more of his current lighthouse tokens, "Split Rock" Lighthouse in Minnesota on a stamp cover, a US commemorative of Columbus' 500th anniversary, and 2 Pacific Coast stamped covers featuring lighthouses.

Mark described several exonumia pieces, a sterling Panama Canal Zone postage stamp replica showing the Thatcher Ferry Bridge, a Mexican wedding "bolo," and a George Washington 1932 advertising token sample.

Gordon brought his Beijing, China Tienamen Square silver round (he had been searching for it), and two Peninsula Coin Club medals featuring the Pigeon Point lighthouse.

Whalen exhibited a cardboard poster of World War II vintage, discovered within the wall of "Cooper House" written in 4 languages warning west coast "enemy aliens to vacate the Coast!"

Herb brought a grouping of Bank of California ink blot advertisements, all featuring scenes of early San Francisco, streets, buildings, people, some being photos, and others line drawings.

Michael brought his magnificent Henry Meiggs medal, made by the US Mint, engraved by the Wyons, with art by Tiffany & company.

September 2008 RAFFLE

Our Raffle raised \$35.00 and featured the following items and winners.

- 1) "Alpert's Catalogue of Charge Coins" went home with Whalen.
- 2) Gordon won another book, "Monedas de Marruecos—Moroccan Coins" by Blasco
- 3) A small set of Coins of Israel went to Whalen.
- 4) A 1986 Proof Set went to Ed.
- 5) A Pier 39 silver-plated medal went to Lucky Ed, a winner twice!

2009 Papers contest

Articles are solicited for the next PCNS papers contest. The due date will be the April 2009 meeting. Authors are reminded that all illustrations and photos must have the permission to be used for publication. Also note that many images available on the internet are not in the public domain nor of high enough resolution to be suitable for the quality of publication that we envision. Full contest rules will be available on the PCNS website, www.pcns.org.

The 2007/8 publication is now in the works!